

# Plot owners have dig at Olympics director

by SALLY SCOTT

**ANGRY pensioners gave an Olympic chief a hostile reception this week as they asked him to explain why the allotments they have cultivated for years are to be bulldozed for the 2012 Games.**

Tom Norris, 83, and Albert Dickenson, 86, who have had plots at Manor Gardens Allotments for almost 60 and more than 40 years respectively, were among around 100 allotment holders who gathered at the site off Waterden Road, Hackney Wick, on Monday to quiz

Gareth Blacker, director of development at the LDA (London Development).

Mr Dickenson, of Pownall Road, Dalston, who inherited his allotment from his father, will be forced out when the 81 plots are bulldozed to make way for a concrete footpath into the Olympic park.

"The community up here will be destroyed," he told the *Gazette* before meeting Mr Blacker.

"They're getting rid of 100 years of history for four weeks of the Olympics."

The LDA is planning to move the allotments to a site in Marsh Lane in the neighbouring borough of Waltham Forest, although they are yet to submit a planning application to that

council's planning committee. The move is opposed by the majority of allotment holders, who say the land was intended to be left in perpetuity as allotments by its former owner, Major Arthur Villiers.

Mr Blacker explained the problem was the allotments were in the middle of the Olympic park.

Mr Norris, of Amhurst Road, Hackney, will see his shed, which was built from Second World War bomb debris, knocked down if the Olympic plans go ahead.

"A lot of us feel like there's no point fighting because the decision has already been made," he said.

A spokesman for the LDA



Angry – Tom Norris and Albert Dickenson

confirmed there was no way the allotment holders could remain on the site.

"The ground has to be levelled and reduced down significantly," he said.

"We have gone out of our way to find them a replacement site where the allotments can flourish and in the legacy period after the Games, they will be moved back into the Olympic park, possibly to a larger site."

Julie Sumner, who has an allotment and is a member of the plot holders' committee, had a much more positive view than others after Mr Blacker's visit.

"It was a generous gesture for him to come down on a very wet day and he said he was very affected by the strength of the community," she said.

"He knows this isn't just a community they can pick up and put somewhere else and expect it to continue as it is. It's not all over," she added.

The LDA will attend the allotment holders' annual meeting on Saturday, October 7 to update them on any news.



Gareth Blacker, from the London Development Agency, tries to reason with plot owners

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